AFRICAN AMERICAN
RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

To: Interested Parties
From: Henry Fernandez & Isaiah Bailey, African American Research Collaborative
Date: September 10, 2022
Re: August 2022 Poll for the ACLU of Colorado

About This Survey:

On behalf of the ACLU of Colorado, the African American Research Collaborative (AARC) polled 1,223 Colorado adult US citizens. 95% of those taking the poll are Colorado registered voters and 5% were not registered when taking the poll, in recognition that voter registration can occur up to election day in Colorado. The poll oversampled African Americans (n=375) and Latinos (n=375). The blended phone and online poll was in the field from August 11 to August 26 and has a margin of error of +/- 2.8% for the full sample. The margins of error for the Black and Latino samples are +/- 5.1% and the White sample is 4.9%.

Findings Overview:

- Coloradans see voting as an essential element of making change but have concerns about whether elected officials will really look out for people like them. They have higher levels of trust for their state government over the federal government and to some extent see it as a bulwark against federal policy shifts.
- Coloradans appreciate their direct democracy ballot initiative process and there is very strong support for the November 2022 affordable housing ballot initiative.
- Inflation is the number one issue of concern for all Colorado voters, followed by the economy, mass shootings/gun violence, affordable housing/rent, and homelessness.
- 80% of Coloradans consider housing affordability, and especially rent costs, as either a crisis or a major issue.
- The Colorado electorate is very open to and generally supportive of policies that advance civil rights, including pro-immigrant policies, addressing mass incarceration, and public education that is safe for LGBTQ and other students and teaches real history about racial discrimination.
- On policing, Coloradans prefer a policy that combines accountability for police with funding social services proven to reduce crime.
- School teachers and college professors are the most trusted messengers on issues of importance. Black and Latino respondents have high trust for Black and Latino elected officials respectively.

- Voters who are less likely to vote in November are generally quite supportive of Colorado civil rights groups' policy positions. In our survey, 43% of voters said that they do not always vote in Congressional elections. A get out the vote (GOTV) plan to mobilize these voters using civil rights issues could help build power behind those issues.

How Coloradans Think About The Election

Colorado residents view voting as important for making change. Asked to rate the effectiveness of various mechanisms for change, responses for "voting" generated a mean score of 7.61 (on a scale of 1 to 10), exceeding the scores for non-electoral activities such as joining an advocacy group (6.16), participating in a corporate boycott (5.65) or a protest, demonstration, or march (5.03). African Americans (7.74), Latinos (7.66) and Whites (7.63) all believe in voting as a leading tool for change. While White respondents all believe voting is the most important tool for change, there is a gap between White Independents (7.05), White Republicans (7.66), and White Democrats, whose 8.30 is strongest among groups tested. Perhaps not surprisingly, those who don't always vote in Congressional elections view voting as less important than those who always vote in Congressional elections (6.97 versus 8.08 respectively). Yet this is still seen as the most effective tool for change even for these less frequent voters.

Encouraging your friends and family to vote is seen across the board as the second most effective tool for making change, with a mean score of 7.01. There is modest racial/ethnic variation between African Americans (7.45), Latinos (7.21) and Whites (6.97).

Coloradans like the direct democracy of ballot measures and strongly support the affordable housing ballot measure. Colorado's direct democracy ballot initiative opportunity is seen as a reason to vote. Coloradans scored the ability to vote directly on issues that matter a 7.48 as a persuasive reason to vote and scored the actual 2022 ballot initiative on affordable housing as a 7.43. This corresponds with the high level of support we found for the affordable housing ballot measure with 77% of Coloradans saying they support the measure.

Coloradans have concerns whether elected officials look out for them and are addressing issues like racism, discrimination, and the number of people incarcerated. Majorities of Latino (65%), White (54%) and Black (65%) respondents believe, "The people running for office seem unlikely to look out for people like me and my community." 56% agree statewide. Majorities or pluralities of respondents hold this view across all regions of the state: Denver Metro (60%), East (54%), and West (47%).

Majorities of White (57%), Latino (67%), and Black (77%) respondents believe that "elected officials are not doing enough to fight back against racism and discrimination." There is significant difference based on ideology with Liberals (81%) and Moderates (68%) believing this is a problem and Conservatives (30%) not believing so.

Strikingly high and similar numbers of Whites (70%), Latinos (70%) and African Americans (71%) believe that people running for office are not doing enough to address the size of the prison population. Almost half (48%) of Conservatives agree.

Coloradans prefer their state over the federal government and identify with the importance of civil rights struggles. We gave respondents a list of positive and negative feelings words (angry, depressed, fearful, hopeful, motivated to take action, disgusted) and asked them whether these reflected feelings they had about national/federal politics and politics in the state of Colorado. The top choice of words for federal politics was "Disgusted" with 44% choosing it. The top choice for Colorado state politics was "Hopeful" at 34%. The most "Hopeful" about Colorado state politics are African Americans (46%), those with a college degree (41%), and Liberals (56%). This is not to say that everyone loves state politics and hates federal politics, as 30% of Coloradans said they were "Disgusted" with state politics and 25% said they were "Hopeful" about national/federal politics. But there is a meaningful difference in perception of state and federal politics among Coloradans.

We tested 13 messages on a scale of 1 to 10 to see whether respondents found them effective in encouraging them to vote. Frankly, all the messages tested well. A message about honoring the legacy of community activists, civil rights leaders and women who fought for the right to vote tested best for Whites (7.65). For people of color, we added their self-identified ethnic/racial identity to the statement, for example for African Americans making it Black community activists, civil rights leaders, etc. African Americans scored this 8.12 and Latinos 7.73.

Messages that juxtaposed concerns about the federal government's shift away from protecting rights with the ability to elect state and local officials who would protect Coloradans' rights also performed well. Strongest among these was: "Our democracy is threatened. We must vote for local elected officials who will ensure fair, transparent elections and reject partisan lies about voter fraud," which scored a 7.49. Similar messages about threats from an extremist Supreme Court (7.45) and the Supreme Court forcing abortion decisions to states so state elections will now decide abortion rights (7.43) performed well.

The Issues

Inflation is the number one issue for all groups. After that there is variation based on demographics. 40% of all Coloradans listed inflation/rising cost of living in their top 3 issues that elected officials and candidates should address. This was the top issue for all racial/ethnic groups, genders, income levels, education levels and regions.

Statewide this was followed by the economy (31%), mass shootings and gun violence (20%), affordable housing/rent (19%) and homelessness (18%). However, there is variation among groups on the priority of issues following inflation. For young adults, mass shootings and gun violence scored second highest (29%) and K-12 education (21%) was in the top 5 issues. For

Black people mass shootings and gun violence scored second (along with the economy at 25%), while racism and discrimination were next up at 24%.

There is variation on affordable housing concerns based on the type of community respondents live in. While 25% of Urban residents identified affordable housing as a top priority, only 19% of suburban and 14% of small town/rural Coloradans did. Similarly, 23% of Denver Metro, 15% of East, and 11% of West respondents listed affordable housing/rent as a priority.

The pandemic, which in 2020 was a top priority nationally, now was only identified as a top 3 issue by 4% of Coloradans.

Housing affordability (especially rental housing) and homelessness are considered major issues or crises by at least 80% of Coloradans. Affordable housing ballot initiative is very popular. We dug deeper on the issue of housing affordability and found that it resonated with all groups as a problem, with 37% of Coloradans considering it a "crisis" and 43% considering it "a major issue, but not a crisis." Higher percentages of African Americans (44%), Latinos (42%), and City residents (48%) consider it a "crisis." 4% or less of all demographics considered housing affordability "not a problem at all."

The housing crisis is seen first as an issue of rents that are too high. When asked which is more important, statewide "lowering rent prices" (55%) wins over "helping more people in Colorado become homeowners" (34%), with "lowering rent prices leading across all demographics. There are two groups for which "lowering rent prices" garners a plurality over "homeowners", but a smaller one – those with a 4-year degree (48% vs. 43%) and married people (47% vs. 42%).

Statewide, homelessness is seen as a major issue (48%) or crisis (36%). 78% or more of all ideologies and party IDs see homelessness as at least a major issue: Liberals (41% crisis, 47% major issue), Moderates (40% crisis, 46% major issue), Conservatives (26% crisis, 52% major issue), Democrats (40% crisis, 46% major issue), Republicans (32% crisis, 49% major issue), and Independents (36% crisis, 48% major issue).

Given this high concern about housing affordability, it is not surprising that the affordable housing ballot measure is very popular: 77% of Coloradans support, 12% oppose, and 11% are unsure/undecided. The measure is popular with strong majority support across all demographics with highest support among African Americans, City residents, people under 50, Liberals and Democrats. But the affordable housing ballot measure has strong support across party and ideologies with 62% of Republicans, 74% of Independents, 59% of Conservatives, and 83% of Moderates in support.

Civil Rights Issue – Immigrant Rights: Coloradans are supportive of immigrant rights already in place in the state as well as new efforts to protect undocumented immigrants in their interactions with law enforcement. We asked two questions related to existing steps that the legislature has undertaken to protect and/or integrate undocumented immigrants. First, we

asked whether respondents support or oppose recent state efforts to ensure undocumented immigrants can "fully participate in our communities" through access to drivers' licenses and in-state tuition. When asked whether you support "taking these types of actions," 61% of Coloradans support and 35% oppose. Using a net score (total support – total oppose), support was highest among African Americans (net + 48) and those 18 to 29 (net + 50). Support was lowest among those over 50 (net – 6), Republicans (net – 15), and Conservatives (net – 31).

Second, we asked about existing laws protecting undocumented immigrants in their interactions with law enforcement and local courts, including "local law enforcement cannot arrest or stop a person merely on suspicions of a violation of civil federal immigration laws," and whether "you support or oppose Colorado taking these types of actions?" 61% of Coloradans support and 30% oppose. This had somewhat lower opposition across the board than the prior question with support among 50+ shifting from net – 6 to net + 10 and support among Latinos shifting from net + 35 to net + 41.

Finally, we tested new potential legislation that would make it "illegal for local law enforcement to hire for-profit companies to search personal data to try to determine whether someone is a U.S. citizen or their immigration status." 56% of Coloradans support the legislation, 34% oppose, and 10% don't know. This has somewhat lower support across the board than the existing laws that we tested. This is probably a function of both it being new, and it being a harder issue to understand.

Civil Rights Issue – Mass Incarceration: Coloradans want to reduce to mass incarceration and prefer messages that address reducing costs for taxpayers, providing mental health alternatives, limiting prison to people who commit serious violence, and giving second chances. Black, Latino, Liberal and Urban voters believe high prison populations are in part due to discrimination. We tested 7 anti-mass incarceration policy positions to see which had the highest levels of support among Coloradans. All received majority support. Those with the highest support are:

- (74%) Many people in prison should have received mental health or drug addiction services instead of prison sentences.
- (73%) It is very expensive for Colorado taxpayers to have so many people in prison.
- (70%) Prisons should only be for truly dangerous people who pose a violent threat, and there are too many people in prison for low-level non-violent crimes and technical parole violations.
- (68%) Even when people make mistakes, it's important to give them a second chance, rather than throwing people away in prison for years and even decades.

While still garnering majority support, messages that suggested that money diverted from prison could be spent on education and other issues, or that prison sentences have become too harsh and people are spending too long in prison, did not have the same levels of support.

While not quite as high as the top 4 messages across all voters, the message "There is discrimination and bias in our criminal justice system. As a result, Black people are more than 6 times as likely to be incarcerated in Colorado as White people, and Latinos are more than twice as likely" garnered 65% support statewide. It was strongly the most popular message among African Americans and among the most popular for Latinos. It is not a message that turns off most White people who support it at 63%. Only Conservatives have a net negative reaction to the message with 49% oppose and 44% support. Thus, this is a message that can mobilize people of color and Liberals (88% support) with limited negative impact elsewhere in the electorate.

Given recent legislation in Colorado increasing prison sentences for fentanyl possession and the debate about that policy, we asked whether Coloradans preferred an increase in investments in drug prevention and treatment or sending a strong signal by increasing prison time for anyone possessing fentanyl. 56% of Coloradans prefer treatment and prevention investments compared to 44% who support increased prison time. Support for treatment and prevention was highest among those under 30 and City residents.

Civil Rights Issue – Policing: When considering policing, Coloradans prefer messages that demand police accountability and funding for social services. The best message (across all demographics) separates the issue of accountability from funding: "We should not have to choose between police and social services. Our communities need police departments that are well managed, trained and held accountable. We also need more social workers and youth programs. To keep our communities safe, we need well-funded social services and police departments." This message scored a 7.82 on a 10 point scale among all Coloradans and was very high among all groups, including across all political ideologies and party lines: Whites (7.84), Latinos (7.88), African Americans (7.77), City (8.00), Suburb (7.85), Rural (7.69), Liberals (8.16), Moderates (7.82), Conservatives (7.48), Democrats (8.15) and Republicans (7.76).

This combination accountability and dual support message outperformed both a no cuts to police funding message (7.39) and three messages that suggested cutting police funding and redirecting funding to other methods to reduce crime (which scored between 5.5 and 5.7).

Civil Rights Issue – Public Education: Coloradans want schools where staff reflect the diversity of students, racial and gender identities are respected, LGBTQ students feel safe, and an accurate history of racial discrimination is taught. On all four issues that we tested, more than three quarters of Coloradans agreed with the pro-diversity, pro-civil rights position. These policies were supported by majorities across all demographics, races, ideologies, and political IDs. On school staff and leadership teams reflecting diversity of students, 77% of Coloradans agree, including 77% of Whites, 76% of Latinos and 87% of African Americans. On creating welcoming schools where teachers and administrators ensure racial and gender identities

are respected, 82% agree, including 81% of Whites, 82% of Latinos, and 90% of African Americans.

On school administrators needing to ensure LGBTQ students feel safe and free from bullying, 85% of Coloradans either strongly or somewhat agree, including 86% of Whites, 82% of Latinos, and 88% of African Americans. This has strong support across ideologies in Colorado, with majority agreement among Liberals (94% Agree), Moderates (89%) and Conservatives (76%).

On whether we should teach an accurate history of racial discrimination, <u>even if it makes some people uncomfortable</u>, 82% agree, including 82% of Whites, 82% of Latinos and 89% of African Americans. This has cross party agreement, with 91% of Democrats and 68% of Republicans agreeing.

Trusted Messengers

Coloradans have the highest levels of trust for school teachers and college professors to do what is right on issues that matter to them. Black and Latino Coloradans have highest trust for Black and Latino elected officials, respectively. We asked respondents to score their trust for 19 entities or groups "to do what is right on issues that matter to you" on a scale of 1 to 10. The federal government (4.93), celebrities (4.00), and religious leaders (4.71) had the lowest trust scores. School teachers (6.81), Planned Parenthood (6.30 with 7.33 among 18 to 29 year old voters), and college professors (6.15), had the highest.

For African Americans and Latinos, we asked both about generic elected leaders and elected leaders of their same race/ethnicity. For Latinos, "elected leaders" scored 5.88, while "Latino elected leaders" scored 6.94. For African Americans, "elected leaders" scored 6.29, while "Black elected leaders" scored 7.57. For African Americans, also scoring high levels of trust are Black Lives Matter (7.79), Civil Rights Groups (6.89), and President Joe Biden (6.84).

Statewide Elections

In the Senate race, Democrat Michael Bennet leads Republican Joe O'Dea 45% to 34% with 16% undecided. In the Governor's race, Democrat Jared Polis leads Republican Heidi Ganahl 49% to 33%, with 13% undecided. In the US House races (without candidates named), respondents chose the Democrat 42% to 35% with 18% undecided.